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Hello. My name is Robyn Cop and I am here to support the passing of the Complex Rehab Technology Bill (Bill# B325).

I am a lifelong resident of CT and am a licensed Occupational Therapist who is employed by the Hospital for Special Care located at 2150 Corbin Avenue in New Britain, CT. I have been practicing occupational therapy for 22 years, working with individuals who have suffered life changing, devastating injuries and medical compromises. A little over 12 years ago, I helped to develop and implement the spinal cord injury program at HSC. Through my professional experience I have witnessed firsthand the devastation that an injury such as a spinal cord injury can bring into a person's life.

After a spinal cord injury, most individuals experience a decreased or lack of sensation below the level of the injury, muscle weakness or full paralysis of the muscles controlled below the level of the injury, inability to stand or walk, and significant decreased balance in sitting due to poor trunk control due to the lack of muscle strength. They may no longer have any control of their bowel and/or bladder. Due to these changes they require customized durable medical equipment to be able to complete activities that we all take for granted on a daily basis. These needs are life-long.

As a result of the injury, they are at high risk of developing multiple comorbidities which can become life threatening. They can develop pressure wounds, osteoporosis (brittle bones that can break just by a caregiver moving their extremity), and intestinal impaction to name a few. The right customized equipment is imperative to minimize the risk of development of these comorbidities. Medical interventions for these comorbidities can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to treat. Equipment may include customized manual, power assist or powered wheelchairs, commodes (with drop arms and/or

padding), specialty mattresses for their bed (such as low air loss for pressure relief), environmental controls that will allow an individual to independently manipulate environmental barriers such as lights and doors, and standers that can passively support an individual to increase the integrity of the long bones of the extremities.

The process to determine the details of the appropriate equipment for an individual is extensive. A multitude of styles and options of equipment is trialed from least expensive to increasingly expensive as need indicates. The physician, CTRS, OT and PT consult regarding the individual's specific needs from a physical point as well as from the demands of their educational setting, workplace, and home environment. The client's body measurements are recorded, equipment is prescribed and medical letters of necessity are prepared for review by the client's payer source. The use of inappropriate equipment including ill-fitting equipment can be devastating medically as well as catastrophic financially.

The appropriate equipment enables an individual to independently manage pressure relief to decrease the risk of pressure sores developing. It allows independent self-transport and management of environmental barriers in the home and work or school setting enabling an individual's productivity and is psychologically supportive. In the event that ill-fitting or inappropriate equipment is used, many life threatening situations can develop as described. Additionally in the individual whose injury is above a certain level on the spinal cord any situation such as an infection, decreased skin integrity, or impaction can lead to a severe increase in blood pressure that could result in a medical emergency that has resulted in a stroke and even death.

In closing with-out the appropriate customized equipment it is highly likely that complications will develop which will be more costly to the payer/state. It is imperative that Bill # B325 – the Complex Rehab Technology Bill be passed.

Sincerely,

Robyn Cop, OTR/L